

The Social Dimensions of Place and Place Quality Indicators in Urban Space

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ABSTRACT

The concept of place quality emerged from the social indicators movement, which emphasizes the significance of social issues. Accordingly, place quality encompasses not merely the quality of the physical environment but also the quality of the social environment. However, sets of indicators to measure quality in urban spaces mostly focus on the quality of the physical environment. In this context, the aim of the present study is to create a place quality indicator set, which includes indicators about the relationship of society with the urban space emphasizing the social dimensions of place quality. For this aim, a two-stage process was conducted in the study. In the first stage of the study, a conceptual reading was performed on place to be able to identify the social dimensions of place quality. According to the results of this study, the social dimension of place is associated with the concepts of "experience", "identity" and "belonging". In this context, in order to be able to discuss place quality, it is necessary to talk about the indicators that will promote spatial experience, sustain continuity of identity in space, and ensure spatial belonging. In this scope, in the second stage, in studies which contain quality indicators in the urban space, those regarding the social dimension of place were sought. A systematic literature review was performed in the Web of Science database for the selection of studies to be examined. Sixteen sources with the highest association with the subject were determined among the 209 sources. Content analysis was used in evaluating the sources. As a result of the content analysis conducted by the MAXQDA 2022 software, a total of 30 indicators were created under the themes of "experience", "identity" and "belonging". The value of the study lies in the creation of a set of indicators that assess the quality of place based on the concepts of experience, identity and belonging. Moreover, the indicator set is a valuable contribution to the field as it can be utilized by both research and local government entities and is open to ongoing improvement.

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1. Introduction

Until the 1960s, governments were primarily interested in economic development indicators in order to achieve a robust economic system. In the mid-60s, however, it became clear that the social system is equally important, and it was acknowledged that governments should monitor and analyse social issues when formulating policies, thus leading to the emergence of the social indicators movement (Smith, 1973). Over time, the Scandinavian approach, which argues that social indicators should only address objective conditions, and the American approach, which emphasizes that only subjective perceptions should be considered, blended. Thus, a consensus was reached that both objective conditions and subjective perceptions should be assessed when addressing social indicators (Marans, 2003).

In the 1980s, the social indicators concept evolved into the concept of 'quality of life'. Quality of life, which has a multidimensional socio-psychological structure and is described as an 'umbrella term' by Veenhoven (2000), can be addressed by different disciplines. Quality of life in the urban context is also a very comprehensive concept that encompasses physical/environmental, social/ psychological dimensions (El Din et al. 2013).

The concept of the 'place quality' lies at the intersection of urban life quality and the built environment. In this sense, place quality is associated with the effort to seek an answer to people's social/psychological expectations alongside the physical qualities of places (Andrews, 2001). Conversely, the indicators utilized in the extant literature are predominantly oriented towards measuring the quality of the physical environment. Such circumstances are evident in the indicators utilised for public or urban spaces, and in the indicators put forth in urban design guidelines. For example, Yeang (2006) defined place quality indicators based on the concept of liveability and identified indicators for urban quality under four main headings: "Environmental quality", "Physical place quality", "Functional place quality" and "Safer places". In Yeang's study, only the indicators classified under the heading of "safer places" are found to be associated with the quality of the social environment. Conversely, all other indicators are linked to the quality of the physical environment. Similarly, as with the indicators set out in the Essex Design Guide (2007), which defines quality indicators in the public realm, the majority of studies in the literature (Marcus and Francis (1990) and so forth) frequently employ indicators for the quality of the physical environment.

However, place quality, which is based on the social indicators movement, should not be reduced to the quality of the physical environment, and also, it should include quality parameters that are related to social issues. Accordingly, this study has two objectives. The first objective is to define the social dimensions of place quality. The second objective, on the other hand, is to create a comprehensive place quality indicator set that also addresses the relevant quality parameters for the relationship between society and the urban space by strengthening the social dimension of place quality in the urban space. For the purposes of

this study, a two-stage process was adopted. The first stage aimed to define the social dimensions of place, and accordingly, conceptual readings on the concept of place were performed. After reading the studies of theorists who conduct research in phenomenology and humanist geography, the prominent concepts in the transformation of space into place were identified. For the purposes of this study, these concepts pertaining to social themes were defined as the social dimensions of place. The second stage of the study was carried out to determine the quality parameters that would ensure the presence and the sustainability of these concepts, which make up the social dimensions of place. To do so, select studies on the quality of urban space were analysed to identify the indicators related to the social dimension of place. A systematic literature review was performed to pick the studies that will be examined at this stage. For this purpose, a systematic literature review was made in the Web of Science database using the keywords 'urban place quality' and 'urban space quality' with the publication language limited to English and Turkish. Content analysis, a qualitative data analysis method, was used to analyse the selected sources. The MAXQDA 2022 software was employed to perform the content analysis.

The indicator set developed at the conclusion of the aforementioned steps offers a holistic perspective on the concept of quality of place, specifically in terms of enhancing the quality of the social environment. The indicator set allows for the identification of social issues that affect the quality of place using the themes of experience, identity and belonging. Furthermore, the indicator set can be employed by researchers in a variety of fields, including architecture, sociology, and local administration in urban studies and decision-making processes. Additionally, the study's value lies in the potential for improvement of the indicator set. In this context, the fact that scoring can be made for indicators, that indicator scores can be specialised for different urban spaces such as public space or a historical environment, and that local indicators can be added to the indicator set can be given as examples. In this regard, the indicators developed within the scope of this study will facilitate the creation, protection and maintenance of quality of place in urban space.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. A Conceptual Reading Attempt on 'Place'

Space can be considered as a plane that allows something to exist, accommodate or represent itself (Kuru and Özkök, 2017). Many classifications are made regarding space types by theorists. For example, the Cartesian plane defined by Descartes has been handled with three dimensions: height, width and depth. In this definition, space is completely dissociated from humans. On the other hand, Kant defines space as an intuitively comprehended apriori ontology. Apriori is used to indicate knowledge, the accuracy of which is acknowledged from birth without any observation and experiment. According to Kant, space is somehow in the mind (Kant, 2003). Up until the 1950s and 1960s, the positivist paradigm, which argues that reality is independent of the human and that research should focus only on concrete cause-effect relationships, defined space as absolute

emptiness and a form in which the matter exist. Beginning from the 1960s-1970s, during which social movements were experienced around the globe, flexibility, versatility and diversity have been observed in the definitions of space. Accordingly, it is apparent that from then onwards, studies that question the relationship between space and place and that focus on the differences between the two concepts became widespread. In the available literature, place is conceptualized by means of the qualities that differentiate it from space. It is possible to track the conceptualization process of place in the works of Merleau-Ponty, Tuan, Relph, Norberg-Schulz, Seamon, De Certeau, Augé, Soja, Harvey, Casey, and Cresswell (Tuncer Gürkaş and Barkul, 2012). These theorists mainly conduct research in phenomenology and humanist geography. Their perspectives on space and place are briefly discussed below.

According to Merleau-Ponty; consciousness, body and space are intertwined. The movements of the body directed by consciousness produce places and create spaces to which other objects belong. The body, with its movement-perception dialectic, produces spaces as places that have unique qualities of their own. In other words, the body is the place itself in its own phenomenal field (Kaymaz Koca and Hale, 2017, 492). Place is composed of the subject that senses it and the body that experiences it. With each and every movement of the body, place is restructured and re-interpreted with the perception of all senses (Merleau-Ponty, 1996). In Merleau-Ponty's theory, the key concept that enables the transformation of space into place through the body is 'experience'.

In 1974, Tuan defined the term 'topophilia' as the emotional attachment between humans and places (Tuan, 1990). He explored the concept by comparing the meanings of space and place in his books entitled 'Topophilia' and 'Space and Place'. For a space to transform into a place, it is necessary that 'emotions and experiences should be loaded into space and that space should become familiar'. Because 'what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value' (Tuan, 2001, 6). The books' subtitles reflect on Tuan's phenomenological perspective and refer to the concepts that transform space into place. The subtitle of 'Topophilia' is 'A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values', and that of 'Space and Place' is 'The Perspective of Experience'. In this context, Tuan argues that the key concepts that play a role in the transformation of space into place are 'experience' and 'meaning (environmental perceptions, attitudes and values)'.

Relph (1976) states that place has a vital quality instead of being dead like 'space'. Humans' relationship with place is an existential issue and is a product of the experienced and tried phenomena of the lived world; therefore, it is loaded with meanings. On the other hand, placelessness 'reaches back into the deepest levels of place, cutting roots, eroding symbols, replacing diversity with uniformity and experiential order with conceptual order' (Relph, 1976, 143). When Relph's discourse is considered, the elements that transform space into place are 'experience', 'meaning', 'belonging (rooting)' and 'identity (diversity)'.

Norberg-Schulz (1979) defined 'the spirit of place' as a phenomenon that is analysed with space and character. The character, which refers to the atmosphere of place, is also the ontology of place. According to Norberg-Schulz, the concepts that are important for the formation of place and that are necessary to talk about the spirit of a place are 'meaning', 'identity' and 'history'.

In his studies, Seamon (1979) defines place through the activity of bodily movement. According to Seamon (1979), habits make up most of the daily movements. Naming these behaviours that are memorized by the body as 'body ballet', Seamon (1979) calls the repetition of these in the same time period as the 'time-space routine'. The settling of the time-space routines in locations-spaces creates the 'place-ballet' - in other words, a strong sense of place. According to Seamon, the movement of bodies produce existential inwardness combining with space and time to (a sense of belonging to a place). 'Place ballet' is also defined as the place of meaning and commitment that is the outcome of the interaction of individual and bodily routines rooted in a certain environment. In this context, 'meaning' and 'belonging (rooting and commitment)' as well as 'experience' come to the fore.

De Certeau (2002) reverses the accepted distinction between place and space by stating that space is produced by actions, whereas place is an empty system in which actions take place. In this sense, he compares space to language, and he indicates that space has a systematic grammar and people have endless ways to make sense of space by using the structure and rules of this language. De Certeau (2002), who defines space with the word 'movement' and place with the word 'dead', explains place as the 'locations and positions on plans and maps' and space as 'meaningful locations formed by actions'. For instance, spaces are 'lively streets in which people pass', whereas places are 'the buildings and the other products of the built environment, which make up these streets.' Although De Certeau uses the concepts of space and place with reversed meanings compared to the other theorists, the differentiation he makes between space and place is related to 'experience (action/movement)'.

Since the 1990s, 'meaning' has lost its significance in the definitions of place. One of these is the concept of non-places. The human-place relationship in non-places is identified with the feeling of abandonment, alienation and loneliness. According to Augé (1995, 77), a place that cannot be defined as 'identifier', 'relational' and 'historical' is a non-place. In this context, these three qualities play a role in the evolution of a space into a place.

Soja (1996) puts forward the concept of 'third space' by opposing the dualities of subjectivity versus objectivity and spirit versus matter. Soja's classification of spaces is as follows: The first space refers to nature and physical spaces, which are material, objective and real. The second space is representation spaces of fictional nature that are imagined by the mind and that contain abstractions. The third space, on the other hand, is the space of actual actions and experiences. Thus, Soja's concept of 'third space' refers to the social (produced) space where experience – and not just the matter (comprehended) or the spirit (mind-perception) – is at the forefront. Soja's 'third space' corresponds

to place. When an assessment from Soja's perspective is made, it is possible to suggest that the prominent concepts regarding place are related to 'experience (action)'.

According to Harvey (2010), the advancements in transportation and communication in the post-modern era created 'global village' and led to the destruction of all spatial boundaries. Harvey (2010), in this context, conceptualizes the elimination of place by means of time as 'time-space compression'. While locality loses its significance in the face of globalization, space becomes commodified, and an environment without an identity is created for people - in other words, placelessness emerges. In this sense, according to Harvey's assertions, place is related to 'identity (locality and cultural difference)'.

Casey (1997) emphasises the hypothesis that place is a much deeper form of space and argues that existence is integrated with place. This integration occurs via our bodies that carry our experiences. Place is a phenomenon that is constantly recreated and rediscovered through our bodies. Additionally, Casey (2009), who acknowledges the social production of place, argues that place should be considered in conjunction with its cultural aspects. In light of Casey's explanations, place is related to 'experience' and 'culture'.

According to Cresswell (2004, 11), 'When we look at the world as a world of places, we see worlds of meaning and experience'. In addition, place is about a positive sense of belonging and rootedness (Cresswell, 2008). In this context, it is seen that place as defined by Cresswell is associated with 'experience', 'meaning' and 'belonging (rootedness)'.

2.2. Evaluation: Social Dimensions of Place

According to the theoretical framework, it is clear that the concepts that help to transform space into place can be classified into three dimensions based on their thematic similarities. These are 'experience' that explains the existence of space with the body, 'identity' that comes to the fore in the process in which space gains meaning and 'belonging' that emerges as a result of the interaction of the experienced-meaningful space with time. These dimensions are acknowledged as the social dimensions of space, and the underlying reasons behind why they were selected are explained below.

2.2.1. The Existence of Space with the Body: Experience

Experiencing space is the first step for the formation of place. Experience is frequently emphasised in the works of Merleau-Ponty, Tuan, Relph, Seamon, De Certeau, Soja, Casey, and Cresswell. As of their existence, none of our experiences are independent of space, and a space that is not experienced cannot gain the status of place. In this context, for a space to gain the characteristics of place, the presence of factors that will ensure the body to be present in a space and increase an individual's desire to experience a space is important. Within this scope, the 'experience dimension' is accepted as a theme for the section, which is the second stage of the study, and where place quality

indicators were created and quality indicators that contribute to the experiencing of space were identified.

2.2.2. The Process of Creating Meaningful Space: Identity

Another concept that comes to fore in the transformation of space into a place is 'meaning'. Relph, Norberg-Schulz, Seamon, and Cresswell mention that space turns into a place when it has meaning. Rapoport (1977) states that there are two kinds of filters between reality and meaning: the first is the image from the culture that surrounds us, and the second is the image that comes from the person within oneself. In other words, meaningful spaces are created according to our environmental perception after passing through personal and social filters of culture and identity. In this context, the studies of Tuan who mentioned environmental perception in his discourses on place, Casey who touched on the impact of culture, and Relph, Norberg-Schulz, Auge and Harvey who evaluated place from the perspective of identity indirectly refer to the process of creating meaningful spaces. In this context, the transformation of space into place by gaining meaning is evaluated through culture and identity. While society creates the culture, culture creates the identity of society. Identity in society, on the other hand, shapes future generations. This is a never-ending cycle. In this respect, identity-related issues formed under cultural influence are significant in the context of place quality. This is why the 'identity dimension' is accepted as a theme for the section, which is the second stage of this study and where place quality indicators were created, and quality indicators for the relationship of space-identity were identified.

2.2.3. Interaction of Experienced-Meaningful Space with Time: Belonging

The sense of belonging is another concept that gives space the characteristics of place. It is seen that Relph, Seamon, and Cresswell emphasise the sense of belonging in their discourses on place. In addition, historicity is required to flourish the sense of belonging. Therefore, theorists such as Norberg-Schulz and Auge, who refer to the concepts of history/historical, also indirectly refer to the sense of belonging. The sense of belonging is necessary for both the generation and the sustainability of the sense of place.

Within this scope, the 'belonging dimension' is accepted as a theme for the section, which is the second stage of this study and where place quality indicators were created. Besides, quality indicators were identified regarding the issues that will both enhance the sense of belonging in space and prove the existence of spatial belonging.

3. Methodology

The existence of experience, identity and belonging in urban space, which are identified as the social dimensions of place and play a role in the transformation of space into place, creates the quality of place. In this context, to determine the indicators that will ensure the experience of space, the continuity of identity in space and spatial belonging, the studies on the quality of urban

space in the literature were analysed with the content analysis method, and with help of the outcomes of the content analysis, the place quality indicators in the urban space were determined.

3.1. Content Analysis

Content analysis is a type of qualitative data analysis. Qualitative data analysis is the classification and interpretation of a large number of data; in addition, it also involves identifying the relationship between the data (Çelik et al. 2020, 380). Within the scope of this study, the data on the quality of urban space in the literature was thoroughly analysed, and content analysis was used to identify the data pertaining to ‘experience’, ‘identity’ and ‘belonging’ and to transform them into indicators.

The first step of content analysis entails the generation of codes from the data. Coding refers to labelling the data in small pieces by identifying similarities (Miles and Huberman, 2016). The collection of similar codes makes up categories, and the collection of similar categories makes up themes. There are two methods to create categories and themes. In the first method, as explained above, similar codes can be brought together to create categories and themes. In the second method, however, categories and themes can be identified based on the literature prior to performing the content analysis, and the codes identified in the data can be classified under the predefined categories and themes they are associated with.

Details about the content analysis conducted within the scope of this study can be found below:

- The analysis was conducted with the MAXQDA 2022 software.
- The themes were identified as ‘experience’, ‘identity’ and ‘belonging’, these were predefined based on the theoretical framework.
- Categories and codes were generated by examining the data obtained from the sources that were selected for the content analysis.

- While creating the codes; the spatial qualities and indicators in the sources selected were evaluated with the following question: “Are they related to the experiencing of space, the continuity of identity in space, and spatial belonging?”
- From this section onwards, the codes generated in this study will be referred to as ‘indicators.’

3.2. Sample Selection for Content Analysis

In the study, the spatial qualities and indicators about urban space/place quality in the literature were examined. For this purpose, the selection of sources was performed in two stages as described below.

3.2.1. Systematic Literature Review

First, a search was made in the Web of Science database using the keywords ‘urban place quality’ and ‘urban space quality’. During the search, the publication language was limited to English and Turkish. The search yielded a total of 159 results: 24 publications that include the keyword ‘urban place quality’ and 135 publications that include the keyword ‘urban space quality’. The titles of these publications were further eliminated based on their association with the subject. During this elimination, publications that are not directly related to the focus area of this article (such as articles about the relationship of urban space/place with air, water, soil quality, lighting or thermal comfort) were eliminated. Consequently, a total of 104 publications were left.

These 104 publications were read and subjected to another round of elimination according to their relevance to the subject. At this stage, studies that do not define spatial qualities and indicators for urban space/place quality were also excluded. At the end of these eliminations, out of the 159 search results that came up with the search made with the keywords ‘urban space/place quality’, 6 studies proved to be relevant to the subject of this research and to qualify for content analysis. The list of these 6 studies are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Studies Selected for Content Analysis by Means of Systematic Literature Review

| Name of Publication | Author (Pub. Date) |
|--|-----------------------------|
| • The Concept of Urban Space Quality | İnceoğlu and Aytuğ (2009) |
| • Liveability, quality, and place identity in the contemporary city: How to monitor and mitigate the impact of globalization on urban spaces | Sepe (2010) |
| • Analyzing the Quality of Place: Creative Clusters in Soho and Beyoğlu | Durmaz (2015) |
| • A Comparative Study on the Relationship Between the Quality of Space and Urban Activities in the Public Open Spaces | Uzgören and Erdönmez (2017) |
| • Role of Social Indicators on Vitality Parameter to Enhance the Quality of Women's Communal Life Within an Urban Public Space | Khalili (2018) |
| • Measuring Experiential Qualities of Urban Public Spaces: Users' Perspective | Zamanifard et al. (2019) |

3.2.2. Primary Sources in the Literature

In the systematic literature review performed, the keywords of urban space/place quality were scanned in the titles of the publications in the Web of Science database, and the results were listed. As seen in Table 1, the publications that were identified were articles, and in their studies, researchers frequently cited certain primary sources. Hence, such frequently-cited primary studies that do not include the search keywords in their title may be closely related to the subject and should also be included in this study for content analysis. Out of 104 publications examined in

the systematic literature review, the articles entitled 'Urban Space Quality Concept' and 'Measuring Experiential Qualities of Urban Public Spaces: Users' Perspective' proved to present a more comprehensive literature review than other articles and contain the primary sources that are frequently cited in other articles. In these 2 articles, a total of 50 studies on the quality of urban space was cited. Among these, 10 sources that are closely related to the subject of this article and that define quality through spatial qualities and indicators were selected to be included in the content analysis. These primary sources are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Primary Sources on Urban Space/Place Quality in the Literature for Content Analysis

| Name of Publication | Author (Pub. Date) |
|---|-----------------------------|
| • Good City Form | Lynch (1981) |
| • Responsive Environments: A Manual for Designers | Bentley et al. (1985) |
| • Toward an Urban Design Manifesto | Jacobs and Appleyard (1987) |
| • Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space | Gehl (1987) |
| • Cityshape Communicating and Evaluating Community Design | Greene (1992) |
| • The Evaluative Image of the City | Nasar (1998) |
| • How to Turn a Place Around: A Handbook of Creating Successful Public Spaces | PPS (2000) |
| • SpaceShaper: A User's Guide | CABE (2007) |
| • Evaluating Public Space | Mehta (2014) |
| • Creating Places for People | ASBEC (2015) |

4. Results

In this section, the creation of indicators and categories by means of the content analysis performed on select sources is explained.

4.1. Identification of Indicators (Codes)

The spatial qualities or indicators defined for quality in urban space in the sources present in Table 1 and Table 2 are classified into three groups, under the themes of "experience", "identity" and "belonging" according to being related to experiencing of space, the continuity of identity in space and spatial belonging. The categories were identified by collecting similar indicators together. An example of how coding was conducted and how the category with the associated indicator was created is provided below.

4.1.1. Example of Creating Indicators: Positive Image of the Urban Space

The spatial qualities or indicators in the selected studies were evaluated by asking 'is it in association with experiencing of space?' Accordingly, the facts that urban space is found to be safe, clean, well-kept, comfortable, aesthetically pleasing and unique are what creates the desire to experience a certain space, and thus, they should be included under 'experience' theme. These issues were grouped together, and the indicators 'positive image of the urban space' were created.

The researchers who provide definitions relevant to the positive image of the urban space in their studies are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Example of Creating Indicators: The Positive Image of the Urban Space and Researchers Who Refer to the Positive Image of the Urban Space

| Positive Image of the Urban Space | Researchers Who Refer to the Indicator |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| • Safe urban spaces | ASBEC (2015), CABE (2007), Gehl (1987), Greene (1992), Lynch (1981), Mehta (2014), PPS (2000), Uzgören and Erdönmez (2017), Zamanifard et al.(2019) |
| • Clean urban spaces | CABE (2007), Khalili (2018), Lynch (1981), Nasar (1998), PPS (2000), Uzgören and Erdönmez (2017), Zamanifard et al. (2019) |
| • Well maintained urban spaces | ASBEC (2015), CABE (2007), Mehta (2014), Nasar (1998), Uzgören and Erdönmez (2017), Zamanifard et al. (2019) |
| • Comfortable urban spaces | ASBEC (2015), CABE (2007), Greene (1992), Jacobs and Appleyard (1987), Zamanifard et al.(2019) |
| • Aesthetically pleasing urban spaces | ASBEC (2015), Gehl (1987) |
| • Unique urban spaces | Mehta (2014) |

The method explained above led to the generation of the five indicators listed below:

- The positive image of the urban space,
- Spaces suitable for socialization,
- Activities suitable for socialization,
- Presence of individual and social identity in the urban space,
- Presence of the sense of belonging in the urban space.

A total of 30 sub-indicators are found under these five indicators.

4.1.2. Categories and the Relevant Indicators

The categories were generated by bringing similar indicators together. Accordingly, the following four categories were created:

- The indicators grouped under the positive image of the urban space created the category of ‘urban spaces that arouse the desire to experience’.
- The indicators grouped under spaces and activities that are suitable for socialization created the category of ‘urban spaces promoting experience’.
- The indicators grouped under the presence of individual and social identity in the urban space created the category of ‘urban spaces that create meaning with identity’.
- The indicators grouped under the presence of sense of belonging in the urban space created the category of ‘urban spaces that gain meaning with the sense of belonging’.

In Table 4, the themes (‘experience’, ‘identity’ and ‘belonging’) as well as the categories, indicators and sub -indicators grouped under these themes are listed.

Table 4. Place-Quality Indicator Set in the Urban Space

| EXPERIENCE | |
|---|--|
| Urban Spaces that Arouse the Desire to Experience | |
| Positive Image of the Urban Space | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Safe urban spaces <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Feeling safe in the urban space at night 1.2 Feeling safe in the urban space when alone 1.3 The safety of roads for pedestrians and cyclists 2.Clean urban spaces 3. Well maintained urban spaces 4. Comfortable urban spaces 5. Aesthetically pleasing urban spaces 6. Unique urban spaces <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6.1 Preservation and protection of landmarks 6.2 Spatial elements that offer different sensory experiences 6.3 Protection of local elements, products and handicrafts | |
| Urban Spaces that Promote Experience | |
| Spaces Suitable for Socialization | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Sufficient and high-quality public spaces 8. Sufficient and high-quality green spaces 9. Sufficient and high-quality urban furniture 10. Offering an optimum sensory environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10.1 Controlling the noise level 10.2 Protecting the space from adverse weather conditions 10.3 Monitoring air quality 10.4 Ensuring adequate lighting 11. Flexible design of the urban space 12. Compliance of the urban space with universal design principles 13. Accessibility of the urban space <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13.1 Being in a central location 13.2 Diversity of transport options 13.3 Quality of the walkways 13.4 Availability of car parking in the vicinity | |
| Activities Suitable for Socialization | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14. Presence of different types of activities in the urban space <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14.1 Variety of activities with different functions (necessary, optional, social, passive, and active activities) 15. Appeal of the activities in the urban space to different users <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15.1 Diversity of activities for users with different characteristics (such as ethnicity, gender, age and economic status) 16. Use of the urban space at different hours of the day 17. Compliance of the urban space with the order and quantity of activities 18. Providing adequate information for activities that will be organized in the urban space <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18.1 Announcements before the activity 18.2 Orientation on the day of the activity | |

IDENTITY

Urban Spaces that Create Meaning with Identity

Presence of Individual and Social Identity in the Urban Space

19. Coexistence of different identities in the urban space

19.1 Coexistence of spaces that engage users with different characteristics (such as ethnicity, gender, age and economic status)

20. Harmony and tolerance between different identities in the urban space

20.1 Coexistence of different identities without exclusion

21. Urban space that has a role in the transfer of cultural heritage

21.1 The role of the space in the transmission of intangible cultural heritage

21.2 Protection of tangible on-site cultural heritage

22. Protection of the historical environment in the urban space

22.1 Taking measures to protect the historical environment

22.2 Ensuring harmony between old and new buildings

22.3 Re-functioning and utilisation of abandoned historical buildings

23. Observation of traces of social identity in the urban space

23.1 Identification and protection of the traces of social identity and lifestyles in the urban space

24. Urban space that creates awareness about social identity and culture

24.1 Creation of routes about social identity, culture or history

BELONGING

Urban Spaces that Gain Meaning with the Sense of Belonging

Presence of the Sense of Belonging in the Urban Space

25. Strong social relations in the urban space

25.1 Communication between people in the urban space

25.2 Eye contact or exchange of smiles between the people in the urban space

26. Preferability of the urban space

26.1 Frequency of visiting urban spaces

26.2 Inviting friends to urban spaces

27. Importance of the urban space: individual and collective memory

27.1 Existence of personal and social memories about the urban space

28. Desire to protect the urban space

28.1 Organising against the possible changes that threaten the urban space

29. Taking a role in the decision-making processes about the urban space

30. Taking a role in the maintenance and management of the urban space

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The majority of the studies on the quality of urban space are focused on improving the quality of the physical environment. However, the quality of place cannot merely be reduced to the quality of the physical environment, and it is also associated with social issues. As an endeavour to fill this gap in the literature, this study aimed to create a place quality indicator set in the urban space to strengthen place quality in social context. In order to achieve this, the concepts that constitute the social dimension of place should be investigated first. Therefore, in the first stage of

the study, definitions of place were examined, and the concepts that create place were identified.

According to the theoretical framework, place is created with the existence of the body in space. Therefore, spatial experience gains importance. Moreover, places are meaningful spaces, and the process of creating a meaningful space is shaped by identity (and its culture). As a result of being in a space that has been experienced and has gained meaning over time, the development of a sense of belonging to that space begins. Sense of belonging is significant for the transformation of spaces into places. All these processes (experiencing space, continuity of identity in space, and

spatial belonging) refer to the social dimensions of place. In other words, 'experience', 'identity' and 'belonging' constitute the social dimensions of place. From this perspective, in order to speak of the quality of place in the urban space, the indicators should have the following attributes:

- Indicators that will favourably affect the experiencing of space
- Indicators that pertain to the continuity of identity in space
- Indicators that pertain to the presence of sense of belonging in space.

In the second stage of the study, indicators that connected to the concept of 'experience', 'identity' and 'belonging' were identified in the studies on urban quality.

Out of 219 sources that consist of the sources found in the systematic literature review as well as the primary sources in the literature, 16 publications with the highest level of relevance to the subject were analysed using the content analysis method, and the indicators were identified. Main topics of categories and indicators of place quality indicator set in the urban space are as follows:

- The 'experience' theme consists of the urban spaces that arouse the desire of to experience (the positive image of the urban space) and urban spaces that promote experience (spaces and activities suitable for socialization).
- The 'identity' theme consists of the presence of individual and social identity in the urban space.
- The 'belonging' theme consists of the presence of the sense of belonging in the urban space.

The place quality indicator set in urban space consists of a total of 30 indicators, including the 'experience', 'identity' and 'belonging' themes.

The indicators grouped under the experience theme are mainly associated with the physical quality of the urban space. This is proven by the first 13 indicators under 'experience' (1-13), which focus on the characteristics of the urban space, the standards of public and green spaces, or problems related to accessibility. The remaining five activity-related indicators (14-18) are primarily linked to the shape and capacity of the urban space, even though they also have the potential to flourish social relations. It is essential to acknowledge that, while the set of indicators aims to strengthen the social dimension, the quality of the physical environment should not be overlooked.

The first two indicators under 'identity' (19-20) are related to the development of social relations given that they involve the coexistence of people with different identities in the urban space, while the other four indicators (21-24) are related to sustaining social identity through urban space. Under 'belonging', the first two indicators (25-26) are significant in the context of social relations, whereas the remaining indicators (27-30) are associated with the protection and ownership of the space. The indicators under 'identity' and 'belonging' mainly pertain to the social dimension of the quality of place.

It should be kept in mind that quality of place indicators are interrelated, and in this context, the improvements in a certain indicator may positively affect other indicators that are under a different theme. For example, an improvement in '1. Finding the urban space safe' under 'experience' will positively affect the indicator '26. Preferability of the urban space' under 'belonging'. Therefore, the indicators under 'experience', 'identity' and 'belonging' are closely related, the boundaries between these categories are not very definite, and these categories prove to be in a cycle that follows each other.

The methods to be used to measure indicators vary according to the objective and subjective characteristics of the indicators. While some indicators are purely subjective, others are solely objective, and some are both subjective and objective. For example, within the scope of indicator '1. Thinking that the urban space is safe', it is possible to objectively determine the safety of roads for pedestrians and cyclists. However, the stakeholders' perception of safety is linked to their subjective views. Employing questionnaires enables the measurement of a subjective indicator, while on-site observations or field studies are necessary to evaluate objective indicators. Nonetheless, a detailed research on how to measure these indicators was not performed in this study.

This indicator set, which can be used when formulating urban decisions, policies and strategies, brings a holistic perspective to the concept of the quality of place on account of the fact that it is based on strengthening social dimensions. The place quality indicators presented in this study should be considered in the urban planning process to ensure the creation, protection, and maintenance of the quality of place in the urban space.

In future research, it may be worthwhile to examine the inclusion of local indicators within the current quality of place indicator set. It is worth noting that the set of indicators created in this study is open to further improvement.

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